

Claims

1. A ground apparatus for loading and unloading an aircraft (53) with a cargo compartment (52), said apparatus comprising:

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a conveyor (8) having a first end and a second end and being at least partially extendable from said apparatus into said cargo compartment (52),

10 said conveyor (8) including a succession of conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90), each of said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) having a set of wheels (44, 76, 101, 102) and defining a respective activatable conveyor path,

15 said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) being mutually interconnected by means of coupling members (38, 81, 82) that allow for a sideways mutual pivotal movement of said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) and for a mutual pivotal movement of said conveyor units about an essentially horizontal axis (83, 84),

20 said apparatus being constructed for storing said second conveyor (8) in a state wherein at least two successive conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) are mutually pivoted about said essentially horizontal axis (83, 84).

25 2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein an endless conveyor belt (9) is arranged above said conveyor (8).

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3. An apparatus according to claim 1, including a bridge member (50, 105) adapted to be supported by said aircraft and to support said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) during said extension from said apparatus into the cargo compartment (52).

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4. An apparatus according to claim 3 wherein said bridge member (50, 105) comprises guiding means (55, 56, 57, 106, 107) for guiding said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90).
5. An apparatus according to claim 1 wherein a first end conveyor unit (31, 90) arranged at said first end includes means for varying the inclination of said conveyor path of said first end conveyor unit (31, 90)
6. An apparatus according to claim 5, including a conveyor front member (45) which is hingedly mounted to said first end conveyor unit (31, 90) and which can be set with a desired inclination relative to the conveyor path of said first end conveyor unit (31, 90).
7. Apparatus according to claim 1 wherein each conveyor unit (30, 31, 70, 90) comprises an endless conveyor belt (40, 46, 71, 93).
8. Apparatus according to claim 7, wherein each endless conveyor belt (40, 46, 71, 93) is driven by a driving roller (72) and one or more further rollers (33, 34, 35, 73), which are supported by a frame (36, 41, 75), which in turn is supported by a wheel-carrying support member (37, 42, 77, 78, 97).
9. An apparatus according to claim 7 wherein the width of said conveyor belt (40, 46, 71, 93) is greater than the distance between said rollers.
- 25 10. An apparatus according to claim 1, including control means (47, 48) whereby an operator present inside the aircraft (53) can control said conveyor (8).
- 30 11. An apparatus according to claim 1, said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) being interconnected by means of releasable coupling members (38, 81, 82).

12. An apparatus according to claim 1, including driving means cooperating with said conveyor units (30, 31, 70, 90) for extending said conveyor (8) from said apparatus, such as by way of friction.

5 13. An apparatus according to claim 1, placed on a vehicle (1).